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August 5, 2005

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Director and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON MRSA**

On February 11, 2003, your Board asked the Department of Health Services to provide regular updates on methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in the County Jail. In June 2003, your Board asked us to investigate MRSA in the County Probation (Juvenile) facilities and report back to the Board. This is an update to our report on May 2, 2005.

MRSA AT THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S FACILITIES

A total of 744 cases of MRSA were identified in the second quarter of 2005, including 216 cases in April, 250 cases in May and 278 cases in June. A total of 1,361 cases have been identified thus far in 2005 versus 1,206 cases identified in the same time period in 2004. The percentage of cases identified within 5 days of admission (presumed to be acquired in the community) has increased to 32% in the first half of 2005 versus 22% in the same time period in 2004; the percentage of cases identified >15 days after admission (presumed to be acquired within the Jail) has decreased from 55% to 42% in the same time period. However, in June there was a noticeable increase in the absolute number of cases identified >15 days after admission. It is possible that the warm weather contributed to the spread of MRSA. For the past several years, there has been an increase in MRSA in the Jail during the spring and summer months and this seasonal trend has been noted in other studies.

There continues to be a difference in the epidemiology of MRSA by gender. In the first six months of 2005, 50% of the cases in female inmates were identified in the first 5 days after admission versus 28% of the cases in male inmates.

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Staff from Public Health tabulate the number of cases and provide the basic statistics to the new Jail Epidemiologist. The Jail Epidemiologist will investigate possible reasons for the increase in cases in June identified >15 days after admission to the Jail (especially in Men's Central Jail).

The bi-monthly MRSA DHS-Jail Task Force meeting took place in June 2005. Topics discussed included improving laundry tracking and distribution, expanding wound care supplies, and employee and inmate education. The next meeting is this month.

MRSA IN THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION FACILITIES

Since April 2003, 194 cases of MRSA have been reported from the Probation facilities (Juveniles) including 50 in 2005. There have been more reported cases in boys (30) than girls (20). Of the 50 cases, 21 (42%) were identified within 5 days of admission to Probation (probably community acquired) and 22 (44%) were identified more than 15 days after admission to Probation (probably acquired during detention).

MRSA IN THE COMMUNITY

Public Health has recently updated the MRSA website (<http://lapublichealth.org/acd/MRSA.htm>) to include background information, guidelines, and physician and community health education. Public Health staff recently authored two articles about community-associated MRSA that were published in Southern California Physician and *The Public's Health*. The latter is a DHS publication that is sent to 34,000 health professionals in Los Angeles County. The articles are meant to educate Los Angeles County physicians about the nature, transmission, and treatment of these infections.

If you have any questions or need more information, please let either of us know.

TLG:JEF:EB

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c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Sheriff
Chief Probation Officer